Reviewer's report

Title: A 5As Communication Intervention to Promote Physical Activity in Underserved Populations

Version: 2 Date: 31 May 2012

Reviewer: Nanette Mutrie

Reviewer's report:

General comments

This is a very well written manuscript. The theory is well described and translation of the theory into an intervention is very well done. The design is very interesting and well thought through. This is an important topic for Health Services Research around the world. We do not yet know how best to promote physical activity in primary care.

Major compulsory revisions

1. The main concern is that it is not clear from the title that this is a protocol paper. This must be corrected. Once the authors settle with the idea that they are writing a protocol paper then they must go through the manuscript and exclude everything that they have found so far such as the number of doctors recruited and number of visits etc. The tense then also must be corrected – this will be a plan of action and therefore in the future tense.

2. The discussion section which tells us of amendments should be deleted and those amendments become part of the protocol. The discussion should instead include how this approach will take the literature forward .

3. However, I am concerned that perhaps the results of this study have already been presented in this reference [Carroll JK, Antognoli E, Flocke SA. Evaluation of physical activity counseling in primary care using direct observation of the 5A’s. Ann Fam Med 2011; 9: 416-422.] and I expect that the editor would need re-assurance on that point since the protocol paper should always precede the outcome paper. If this is a pilot study on which the current protocol is built then more should be made of that in the manuscript.

If however I am mistaken and this is not intended to be a protocol paper, then the purpose of the paper must be made clear in the tile and the abstract. Perhaps it is intended to be an extended description of the intervention? If this is the case then abstract needs to reflect this. If it has another purpose then the abstract needs to supply details of the related results and not just state that they will be discussed. The purpose of the paper needs to be made clear at the end of the introduction.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field
Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests